

Her Edit

FOR THE INDEPENDENTLY MINDED WOMAN



Issue Six
July/August 2014

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The Sport Issue

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front cover image
courtesy Rachael Heyhoe Flint

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Her Editor



Welcome to Her Edit

To those of use who knew the pain, Of Valentines that never came,
And those whose names were never called, When choosing sides for basketball.
At Seventeen, Janis Ian, 1975

If, like me, Janis Ian's achingly poignant lyric revives painful memories of shivering in a self-consciously short gym skirt and feelings of awkwardness, humiliation and failure, then please read on. I hated sport at school and probably, at least in part, why I wasn't very good at it.

Over thirty years later and only 12 per cent of 14-year old girls get enough physical exercise a week - half as many as boys - and they cite embarrassment and a lack of suitable outlets as their reasons why.

Despite the phenomenal performance of women in the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, female sports success is still paid scant attention in the media. There is clearly a correlation between the woeful lack of public profile for women in sport, the disparity of investment in men's and women's sport and the barriers which prevent young women from taking part at all levels.

I have found this issue hugely inspiring, from the determination and achievements of those who participate to the insight into the challenges women's sport faces.

What I hope this issue reveals is that sport can be a source of self-esteem, achievement, a political instrument and a sheer joy. Please share your thoughts and experiences on our blog page at www.heredit.com/hercomment or join in our conversation on twitter.

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Having to learn how to make chapatis instead of playing football.



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©Safeena Razzaq

The gold standard

Five time gold medal winner Sophie Christiansen OBE tells Her Edit what motivates her to compete and the challenges she has met to become a winner



Sophie Christiansen OBE is a para-equestrian dressage rider who competes for Great Britain. Her triple gold at the London Paralympics in 2012, made her a five-time Paralympic champion. She was born with quadriplegic cerebral palsy. Sophie took some time out from her busy schedule to talk to Her Edit about the challenges of her sport and why in terms of gender, it's important to have a 'level playing field'.

Sophie began riding purely as physiotherapy at the age of six with the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA). She says,

'My mum has a terrible allergy to horses and she sneezed so much, I think I did it partly to wind her up! So if I wasn't disabled I would probably never have got onto a horse. Riding has helped so many with a disability with their balance and co-ordination. In fact I believe I wouldn't be able to walk as well as I can if it weren't for riding.'

She has always been quite sporty and competitive and at a mainstream secondary school played hockey, football and netball with her able-bodied counterparts. Her talent for riding was recognised in year nine and the school allowed her to do it as one of her PE sessions every week.

Because her school had a special unit she got the disabled support she needed in terms of physiotherapy and speech therapy and as a result, she excelled academically and went on to get a first

class degree in mathematics. Sophie recognises that the support she received at school was clearly fundamental to her success and that of her fellow students who attended the special unit.

Equestrian sport is the only one where men and women compete together and Sophie believes this makes an important difference.

'It is important to me that I compete on a level playing field – it's not about strength or size, but about your skill with how you communicate with your horse. So there is no gender bias in the sport. However, I do think it would be interesting to do a statistical study of gender and riding from child to adult. A larger number of little girls (rather than boys) want to ride, but when you reach the top level there does seem to be a lot more men than women.'

We wondered if the same gender bias which exists in able-bodied sport exists in disability sport. Sophie thinks not, but recognises there is a wider lack of parity.

'It is less marked because it is quite small compared to its able-bodied counterpart. So on my team there are two guys and five girls. I am very fortunate in my sport, but I do recognise the problems generally.

I was at an event for the Women's Sport Trust last week and I was really shocked to learn that of all the sponsorship funding only 0.4% is given to women in the UK and in terms of media coverage only 7% is for women's sport.'

For Paralympic athletes the sport is divided into categories depending on the severity of the disability. There are five grades in para-equestrian dressage and Sophie is in the most severely disabled category. Riders in her category only compete at walk, but in able-bodied dressage riders walk, trot and canter. Some of the less disabled riders compete internationally against able-bodied

competitors, but Sophie says,

'I'd probably fall off if I had to canter or trot!'

Freestyle dressage is a three event competition: team, individual and freestyle and anyone who has watched Sophie in competition will recognise that she clearly loves the creativity and freedom of expression it allows her.

'It's a bit like ice-skating. Actually it is interesting what happened with my selection of music for the London Paralympics. I am quite into my music and I was fortunate enough to meet a musician Owen

'It is important to me that I compete on a level playing field - it's not about strength or size, but about your skill...'

Gurry (www.DressageMusic.co.uk). He understood that I wanted to play to the crowd and that I wanted the audience to feel part of it. So he helped me put together a mash-up of British music and sound including Queen, Pink Floyd (Another Brick in the Wall which was ironic – ‘we don’t need no education’), The Beatles, a quote from Shakespeare, Land of Hope and Glory and the chimes of Big Ben. Because the compilation was a bit far-out I used it in competitions for a year before London. One of my management (a male, who shall remain nameless) didn’t think this music was suitable because he said people perceive me ‘as a young, fragile woman NOT a rock chick!’ I caught the eye of my musician who looked shocked. But actually that comment made me even more determined. I just thought ‘I’m doing it anyway!’ It was fantastic and I really felt the buzz in the air at Greenwich.’

Clearly there is another individual participating in this event and Sophie’s horse, Rio, is evidently very special to her. Up until the Beijing Paralympics, she had always borrowed horses, but then she met the director of Ascot, Ronnie Wilkie who put together a trust to raise the money so she could buy Rio. He was formerly ridden by a famous able-bodied dressage family called the Eilbergs, so he was already trained to a high level when he and Sophie began their partnership.

‘For my event the horse has to have a phenomenal walk and the right temperament – really calm and reliable plus having a special ‘wow factor’. Rio is amazing and undoubtedly the best horse I have ridden. He loves people and he knows how to look after me, but he can also be quite cheeky. He is the reason I won three gold medals. Unfortunately he is a bit old for Rio 2016, so I have bought another horse, Athena. It is going to be a bit of a challenge but I am hoping she will be even better - we’ll see..’

Sophie lives independently and because she has a career outside of horses, she welcomes the support of her trainer since the age of 13, Clive Milkins at South Bucks RDA, who manages her horses for her. She rides three times a week and goes to a gym two or three times a week and says she couldn’t have achieved what she has without Clive.

Sophie works at Goldman Sachs for two days a week. It’s an internship but she is hoping for a permanent post there. Finding employment clearly presents challenges for people with disabilities, but Sophie’s sporting achievements have had a very positive impact on her career.

‘Having 3 gold medals on your CV certainly helps! It has been very difficult getting a job because so many of the applications are online and it is difficult to specify on standardised forms what special requirements I need. I do need time for training and so I need to be part-time and I can’t be flexible on working location either. I got my internship with Goldman Sachs through

an agency specialising in getting athletes and ex-servicemen into employment. It really helped having the agency as a middle man to explain my situation and what I can offer. Goldman Sachs has been incredibly good about giving me the flexibility I need to have time off and paying for a taxi because I cannot manage the underground. If I had to ask an employer myself, I would feel uncomfortable and worry it would put them off me. That is why so many disabled people just give up even asking for reasonable adjustments of their employers. To some degree I have only succeeded because of my bloody-mindedness.’

Read more about Sophie at her website <http://www.sophiechristiansen.co.uk> or follow her on twitter @SChristiansen87

‘To some degree I have only succeeded because of my bloody-mindedness’



Running the world

Up and Running (not to be confused with the chain of shops by the same name) was set up in Sevenoaks, Kent in February 2010 by Harriet Heal, a clinical psychologist, and Shona Campbell, a running coach and freelance indexer. It is a group aimed at helping women with depression to learn to run. Alexis Jones attended one of the Up and Running groups in spring 2011 and has been running ever since. She is an executive assistant from Kent.

'Women have a wonderful ability to nurture, support and encourage each other and real friendships have been formed'

Opposite page
Shona Campbell, left, and Harriet Heal



Harriet

For me, the Up and Running group is a wonderful way to bridge my work - helping people improve their mental health through psychological therapy - and my running, which is a very important part of my own life and wellbeing.

At work, I spend hours with people carefully unpicking the ins and outs of their history, their thinking, their coping strategies, and how they work or don't work. It's fascinating and fulfilling, but it's all "in the head". Of course, our brains are a part of our bodies, not some separate entity, but I've often felt that a wholly 'in the head' approach is missing something.

With Up and Running, we just show women how, with the right approach, they can run too: a completely different route to psychological wellbeing. It was a very powerful experience for me, to discover what an amazing mood booster running could be.

The word to describe how I feel when I run is 'joy', nothing short of that (even though - and maybe partly because - it's often difficult too). It is a physical, visceral feeling of elation and an extended period of boosted emotional wellbeing afterwards.

If I run in the morning, I feel better for the whole day, whatever else is going on. Nothing else works the same way for me.

So to share that with other women and to say "try this, it works" is really exciting for me. It's so simple and it's so effective. I think many women know that exercise can help them, but find it really hard to motivate themselves and to keep going long enough to reap the benefits, especially if they're feeling low. I think this is where Up and Running really works. The social support of the group means that women can keep their motivation going, and get much needed camaraderie.

At a very practical level, if you have told a friend you will be there to run, then you turn up, and you go out. There are other psychological benefits too. Discovering they can do something they maybe never thought possible can be a powerful challenge to negative beliefs that women hold about themselves, and Shona is particularly good at persuading beginners that they really can.

Body image often changes too, from a negative 'visual' perspective to a sense that the body can 'do' something amazing. It makes us very proud when we see groups of our 'graduates' out running together.

We know they're doing something that is good for them and for each other, and when they choose to continue long after the ten week course with us is over, then we know it's working for them.

'Discovering they can do something they maybe never thought possible can be a powerful challenge to negative beliefs that women hold about themselves.'

Shona

Since my teens I'd suffered bouts of depression which I'd tried to manage with medication and therapy. In my early 40s I took up running in an attempt to get fit and feel better about myself, and after an initial struggle (I'm certainly not a born runner), I found I felt empowered, lifted and more comfortable in my skin as a runner. I qualified as a coach and began coaching adult women recreational runners.

Then I met Harry and we decided to launch a running group for women who experience depression or anxiety. We run ten week walk/run courses for complete beginners, and although the focus is running, it's also about mutual support and understanding.

We often chat about nothing in particular to the group as we run, but just being with people who you know understand and have experienced similar issues to your own can be very comforting,

and of course we will talk more specifically about mental health if any of the participants want to.

They value Harry's professional knowledge and expertise and as I'm very open about my own history that opens the door for them to ask me about my experiences.

Women have a wonderful ability to nurture, support and encourage each other, and real friendships have been formed at Up and Running.

The combination of being outdoors, exercising and being in sympathetic company is a very powerful one, and goes some way towards addressing the isolation and hopelessness that often accompany depression and anxiety. We find that for many of the participants, it becomes a useful tool to help them manage their mental health. I know it certainly is for me.

Alexis

What does running mean to me? Well, when I turned up at the usual meeting place this last Saturday morning, I saw about five familiar and friendly faces and a few not so familiar, but also friendly faces.

As we set off, we all joked about aches and pains, how difficult it was getting up on a Saturday morning, how long it had been since our last run and then as we started to splinter off from each other, as we picked up a steady pace, there were loud sighs, heavy breathing and more chatter and laughter.

Running through the Kent countryside, watching deer jump over the path in front of us, with the sun shining through the trees, listening to fellow runners giggling, huffing or in deep conversation, means so much to me.

I love running for the freedom, the fresh air, the steady sound



©Alexis Jones

of my breath as my feet pound against the soft earth or grass or as I splash through puddles on the home run. I love running for the friendships I have formed as a result of my regular Saturday runs, with women from all walks of life.

When you are all dressed in lycra, there is no knowing what your background is, and I feel free to speak to anyone who will listen, and listen to anyone who wants to talk. I've solved some tricky dilemmas whilst out for a run and gained in insight into the lives of some amazing women.

I love running for the respect and surprise that shows on people's faces when they learn you can run five whole miles - without stopping - and up hills.

For more information visit <http://www.upandrinninginsevenoaks.org.uk> or follow Up and Running on twitter @Uprunning7oaks

Putting Muslim women in the picture

Safeena Razzaq is an illustrator based in Plymouth, who specialises in printmaking. She is interested in creating artwork which tackles social and political concerns. Her inspiration stems from her upbringing and background as a young Muslim woman born and raised in the UK.

Safeena's work reflects elements of cultural diversity, cultural confusion as well as portraying aspects of her own experience. She is not afraid to tackle sensitive, controversial issues, and says she hopes her work will encourage awareness.

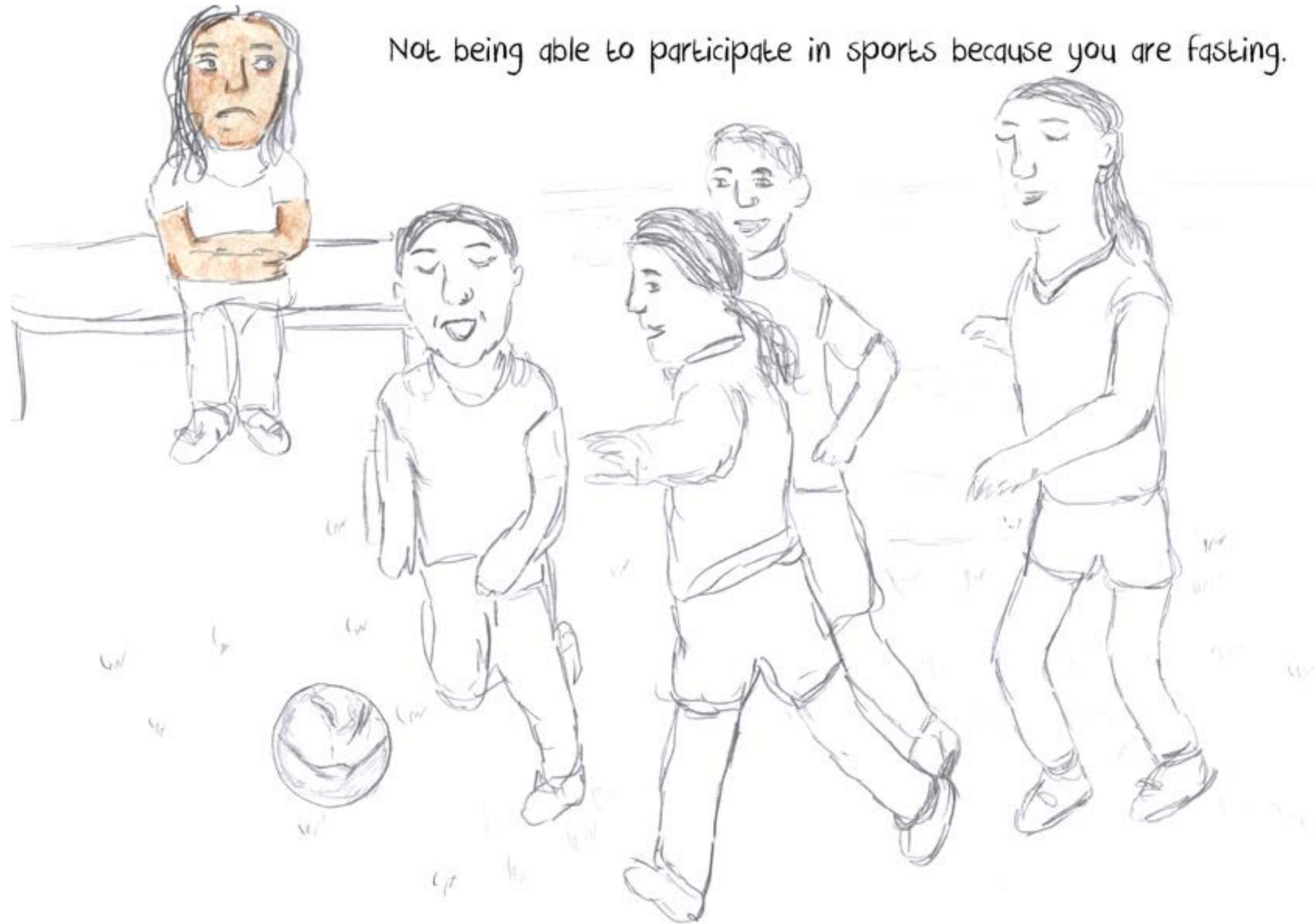
For our Sport issue, Safeena has specially created these drawings which offer a different perspective on women's relationship with sport.

Safeena says, 'Through my work I strive to share my personal journey, related to my struggles and role confusion and hope it displays elements of my empowerment both as an individual and as a woman.'

See more of Safeena's work at
www.safeenarazzaq.com



©Safeena Razzaq



Having to wear jogging bottoms during p.e. because you're not allowed to show your legs



Levelling the playing field

Dr Fiona Skillen is a lecturer in Sport Management at Glasgow Caledonian University. Here, Fiona examines the inherent sexism in sports media for Her Edit.

Women are, and have been for many years, breaking down barriers in a variety of settings, politics, business, the arts and importantly in sport. Women have been playing sports competitively for over two hundred years. They have established their own sports organisations and competitions. They have pushed their bodies to their limits and in doing so have set new world records. And yet, they are treated less than equally with men's sport in terms of media coverage and sponsorship.

This summer will see sport dominate the headlines and television schedules as the Commonwealth Games comes to Glasgow. Women will play a significant role in the national teams of UK: Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales. If trends follow those of the Olympics, media coverage of women's sport will increase, at least for the duration of the Games.

As work by the Gender Hub has illustrated over the past thirty years during major sporting events coverage of women's events increases and outside of these events coverage remains static at

less than 10%. Only 5% of sports media coverage features women, with just one article about women in sport for every 53 written about men.

If you were to base your ideas of gender equality in sport on these three weeks in July and August you would be forgiven for thinking that there is close to parity between the sexes in media coverage. However, analysis of media coverage during the 2012 Olympics highlighted

'Only 5 per cent of sports media coverage features women'

that something more disturbing is in fact happening. The ways in which women's sport is reported, the language and images used is very different to those employed in the reporting of men's sport.

The inherent sexism within sports media has been set in sharp relief in recent years by several, widely reported and now notorious, incidents. The dismissal of Sky

Sports presenters [Richard Keys](#) and Alan Gray following sexist comments made about assistant referee Sian Massey in 2011, more recently the controversial comments made by [John Inversdale](#) about Wimbledon Champion Marion Bartoli during the BBC's coverage of the 2013 championship and Tam Cowan's [article](#) in September last year in a Scottish National Paper where he described members of the Scottish women's football team thus:

'Just the other week, I bumped into a couple of women footballers (I've still got the bruises to prove it) and they were honestly two of the nicest blokes I've ever met.'

These events have highlighted the misogynistic beliefs held by some members of the media, however that is not to say all journalists and editors subscribe to them. Far from it, there are those who are actively pushing for an increase in coverage and quality of women's sport.

Why is there such a disparity in the level and type of coverage of women's sport? There are several possible explanations.



The audience for sports media is predominantly male. Why is that? Put at its simplest men watch more sport than women and men watch more women's sport than women, they have more free time than women. They have a longer formal history of playing sports than women.

But aside from that there are two key factors which I believe are fundamental to this issue. Firstly women's sport in the UK receives 0.5% of total commercial sponsorship, compared to 61.1% for men's sport.

You could argue this is a vicious circle, no funding equals less media interest, and low media interest equals low commercial sponsorship. But perhaps most

fundamental are the lack of females working in sports media. During the London Olympics only 15% of those with press accreditation were women.

One of the ways Scotland is attempting to tackle this inequality is through the charity [Scottish Women in Sport](#), which was launched at the end of 2013. In addition to educating young girls on positive life choices, creating a strong voice to lobby and raise awareness, highlight positive role models, influence decision makers and encourage increased commercial investment into all sports that include women, they also want to break down media stereotypes and increase coverage of women's sport within the popular press.

Let's hope that women do get an increase in coverage in sports media during the Commonwealth Games this summer, but more than that, let's hope that this genuinely marks a turning point in media coverage of women's sport.

Fiona recently published her first book, *Women, Sport and Modernity in Interwar Britain*, (Peter Lang, 2013) and is currently researching the history of the Commonwealth Games in Scotland.

For more about Scottish Women in Sport visit www.scottishwomeninsport.co.uk

Follow Fiona on twitter @FionaSkillen

'...the desire to take part within young girls...must be instilled at primary school'

Playing a straight bat

Rachael Heyhoe Flint is a sporting legend. Amongst her many achievements, she captained the England team in the first Women's Cricket World Cup in 1973, led the campaign for women to become members of the MCC at Lords and was made a Conservative peer in 2011. She is also Vice-Chair of Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club.

Baroness Heyhoe Flint took some time to talk to Her Edit about her remarkable career.



Photograph courtesy of Rachael Heyhoe Flint

Do women bring any distinctive qualities to the game of cricket?

The women's game is essentially amateur, but even now that the England women players are semi-professionals they all seem to portray an air of enjoyment; technically the women's game is more orthodox, mainly because girls and women lack the body strength which their male counterparts have. Batting is far more classic and fielding is always complimented.

What skills have you acquired as a cricketer which you've found helpful in your work in the House of Lords?

I suppose the skills I have acquired (if any!) came as much from when I was captain. I needed to build team spirit and make the girls feel proud to play for England and want to win. I suppose man management and good communication and a sense of humour.

Who inspired you as a child?

My parents were both physical education specialists. My mother was a teacher and a good tennis and hockey player; my father was a skilled cricketer, and eventually he became Director of Physical Education for Wolverhampton.

What opportunities does sport offer women?

Nowadays every national governing body of sport has to show increased participation levels if they are to expect Sport England funding; therefore most sports and recreational pursuits direct considerable resources to making all young girls and women aware what opportunities exist.

You can take a horse to water and so on, but there still has to be the desire to take part within young girls; this must be instilled at primary school level, where to young children sport and leisure pursuits are fun and healthy.

Sadly there is a great lack of PE within Primary Schools. This is the challenge for us all who have an interest in sport, to get this situation improved.

What has made the women's cricket team so successful where the men's team seems to be less so?

Sport is cyclical! Just over two years ago the England Men's team were number one in the world; then other nations take the mantle.

Sometimes I feel that England men's cricket is now very comfortable for them, the players want for nothing. They are not complacent, but do they cease to have the hunger to stay at the top?

The England Women's team still have the Corinthian philosophy of playing for the love of the game-and how that shows !!

Do you believe there a relationship between sport and politics? If so, is this a positive, symbiotic one or does politics merely impinge on good sport?

Politics and sport are nowadays intertwined. National Governing Bodies have to show good governance in order to achieve certain levels of state funding. This is now expected by Government, although Government will never seek to take over the running of sport in this country, but at least it can offer guidelines which are for the overall good of sport and the nation.

Sport impinges on various Government Departments, not only the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), but also Health - how to tackle obesity among the young; Education - insisting PE is part of all school curriculum at primary and secondary level and that there are sufficient qualified PE teachers throughout the profession; Community - making sure public sports facilities and playing fields are maintained.

Would that we could have a Government Department for Sport, with a Minister of State status and a Cabinet role with full budget! Dream on !!!

If there was one thing which would have helped your sporting career, what would that be?

A much earlier recognition of the England Women's Cricket Team in terms of sponsorship, marketing and media awareness. But it was fun working to achieve

that and nowadays the England and Wales Cricket Board give absolute full recognition and support to all of these aspects.

What is the proudest moment of your career?

So many immodest moments! Saving England from defeat v Australia at the Oval in 1976 by batting for eight and a half hours scoring 179! (Very boring innings!!)

Leading England out at Lord's in 1976 v Australia - the first ever women's match at Lords since cricket was first played at this famous venue in 1814.

Being named as among the first 10 Honorary Life Members of the MCC in 1998 after leading a campaign to get women admitted to the all-male Club. It took a nine year campaign of gentle persuasion of 18,000 members to change the Club's constitution!

Even playing hockey for England at Wembley in 1963 in front of 65,000 fans.

I suppose most recently being admitted to the House of Lords as Baroness Heyhoe Flint of Wolverhampton. Who would ever have thought that would happen and I didn't even ask, it just happened!

Who are the role models for women in sport today?

Too many to name all, but how about Tanni Grey Thompson, Jessica Ennis, Mary Peters, Katherine Grainger, and Charlotte Edwards.

If you hadn't been a cricketer, what would you have been?

Certainly not a cook! When I was young, I used to help on my uncle's farm in Hampshire and I wanted to be a combine harvester driver.

I think being a Formula One Racing Driver would be fun - you should see how I nip down the M40 to Westminster from Wolverhampton twice a week.



Photograph courtesy of Rachael Heyhoe Flint

From a different angle

When a (male) friend told her the world record for the biggest fish caught was held by a woman, Jayne Phenton was intrigued and decided to find out more.



Photograph of Miss Ballantine and her record-breaking fish courtesy of Perth Museum and Art Gallery

With the possible exception of equine events (see the interview with Sophie Christiansen on page seven), sporting competitions are generally divided by gender. Physiological difference and history form a seemingly natural segregation of men and women and it's generally the former who are recognised as the fastest and the strongest.

So I was excited to discover that within what's generally considered to be a very male dominated sport, the world record is held by a woman. The biggest fish ever caught on rod and line was a 64 pound salmon hooked by Miss Georgina Ballantine on the River Tay in Perthshire, on 7 October 1922.

It was her fourth salmon of the day and apparently took her almost two hours to land. It measured 54 inches in length and was 28 and a half inches in girth. Her record still stands as the British rod-caught record for the species, but Miss Ballantine's remarkable achievement is not a singular event. In the following two years, Mrs Morison took a 61lb salmon from the Deverton river and Miss Doreen Dovey caught a 59lb from the River Wye at Lower Winforton.

In his article, Not Just for the Boys, Dr Bruno Broughton contends there may be as many as 300,000 women anglers in the UK and while for the boys there is a wholesome Huckleberry Finn image of young fishermen, women anglers seemingly take up the sport later in life.

Over 150 women compete in the annual Ladies' National

Championships, which have taken place under the auspices of the National Federation of Anglers since the mid-1970s, and their prowess is recognised by the angling community.

Moc Morgan of the Welsh Salmon and Trout Association, acknowledges:

'When they are good, women anglers are very, very good - far better than most men, for some reason.'

Perhaps the reason so unfathomable to Mr Morgan is the Theory of the Pheromones. It proposes that women's success in the sport is attributable to their female hormones attracting the fish, but it does not seem

'When they are good, women anglers are very very good - far better than most men'

to bear any scientific scrutiny and one might wonder whether the intention is to undermine women's ability by ascribing any skill to Mother Nature!

Angling has its fair share of celebrity devotees including the actress Diana Rigg, impressionist Faith Brown, former Magpie presenter Jenny Hanley and, the newsreader Fiona Armstrong.

Armstrong wrote a very engaging article for the Daily Telegraph about her love of the sport describing it thus:

'Fishing for salmon, trout and sea trout is one of life's great joys. I

have actually texted a friend from a boat on the River Tweed after catching my third salmon in an afternoon to say, "This is better than sex or shopping." (And it was at the time...)'

Certainly the thrill of the catch seems to be balanced by the requisite patience and concentration, and the meditative quality of an activity which generally takes place in picturesque surroundings.

According to the Angling Development Board, more women are taking up and coaching the sport and if we are to look for inspiration then Miss Ballantine might be our paragon.

At a time when only women over the age of 30 were entitled to vote, wives were unable to petition for divorce on the grounds of adultery and a year after the Football Association had banned women playing on Football League grounds, Miss Ballantine demonstrated that at least waders could be gender neutral.

And in case you wondering about the fish, it was gifted to Perth Royal Infirmary and eaten by staff and patients.

There are a number of women's angling clubs including www.ladiesfishing.co.uk (a North East-based club), the Scottish Ladies Fly Fishing Association, www.sanaladies.co.uk and the England Ladies Fly Fishing Association www.elfa.org.uk while www.fishingforeveryone.com is a website dedicated to getting more women into the sport.

Sports Luxe: a new development in a longer fashion trend



Jean Williams is a Senior Research Fellow in the International Centre for Sports History and Culture at De Montfort University in Leicester. Here she traces the relationship between swimming and performance and how this developed a new costume for women, which is still recognised in fashion parlance as 'sports luxe'.

Athletic girls have a greater pull over their sisters. If you are skilled and well drilled in discipline and sportsmanship, you are bound to benefit in the strife of the world. You are the better able to face disappointments and sorrows. For what do these strenuous games mean? Exercise in the open air, and exercise of a thorough and engrossing character, carried out with cheerful and stimulating surroundings, with scientific methods, rational aims and absorbing chances. Surely that is the foundation of health culture.'

Mrs Lambert Chambers Lawn Tennis for Ladies (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1910 p. 5.)

A transnational network of women's sporting interest expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century with croquet, cycling, golf, mountaineering, skating, lawn tennis and field sports becoming particularly fashionable.

The newly established access to elementary education for the working classes from 1870 onwards, and to further and higher education for middle class girls, were particularly influential. Sport could help to create social bonds, a collegiate spirit and healthy students.

Social health provision like the building of more swimming baths created unintended links with fashion and entertainment. Bathing was an activity that could be done very cheaply, or at great expense, making it widely accessible, including to women.

Morality constantly found itself confounded by market forces. The music hall and entertainment industry also expanded after 1870 and the prevailing morality was now constantly confounded by market forces.



©Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester City Galleries

'Bathing was an activity that could be done very cheaply, or at great expense, making it widely accessible, including to women'

Revealing a toned figure as part of sporting spectacle had its own Sports Luxe versions, even in Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

Professional female 'natationists' included Agnes Beckwith (1862, date of death unknown) and her half sister Lizzy (1880, date of death unknown), who both combined entertainment performance, coaching and teaching.

In 1875, at the age of fourteen, Agnes swam five-miles in the Thames, from London Bridge to Greenwich, in a time of one hour nine minutes. Agnes also exploited private audiences who paid to see a rehearsed act in music halls and other venues such as the Royal Aquarium, Westminster.²

Billed as 'The Greatest Lady swimmer in the world', Agnes and her entourage wore considerably less than most women sea-bathers. They swam 'decoratively' in a glass tank filled with many gallons of water each night and toured nationally.

Agnes married a theatrical agent, William Taylor, in 1882,

although she kept the Beckwith name, for public performances.

Her show was patronised by the Prince and Princess of Wales and she swam in a costume du bain - an elaborate black combination of acrobatic brevity with red decorative swags and ruches.

Read more about Jean and her work at <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/academic-staff/art-design-humanities/jean-williams/jean-williams.aspx>.

Jean's new book 'A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One Sporting Women, 1850-1960' (Routledge, 2014) is available on Amazon <http://www.routledge.com/books/>

¹Lisa Bier *Fighting the Current: The Rise of American Women's Swimming 1870-1926* (New York: McFarland and Company, 2011 p. 33).

²Royal Aquarium Westminster Agnes Beckwith, the greatest lady swimmer in the world patronised by their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales and family. Daily at 5.30 & 9.15. Admission 1s/- from Aquarium or annexe, children half price c 1885, shelfmark Evan.339 The British Library, London.

A vogue for competitive and endurance swimming events followed, in addition to scientific, or synchronized performances. Theatre and music halls covered both high and low culture, enabling sporting performers to explore links with display, fashion and consumerism.

Individual entrepreneurs and performers were significant in both Britain and the US. Kate Bennett and her sisters taught middle to upper class women to swim in New York, but also earned money through tuition at public baths, displays, open-air ballets, aquatic concerts and by sponsoring competitions attended by a paying public at which the victor would win a gold locket or earrings. Kate, who had lost her father to drowning, was driven both to teach people to become proficient in the water and to provide a viable income in a challenging market.¹



©Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester City Galleries

Previous page
croquet outfit c. 1870

Above
swimming costume c. 1870
Courtesy Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall,
Manchester City Galleries

Having a ball

Twenty-six year old Leanne Mabey has been playing football from the age of seven and currently plays for Queen's Park Rangers. She spoke to Her Edit about her motivation and her love of the game.

In her article for Her Edit (page 21), Fiona Skillen quotes Tam Cowan's comment in which he describes members of the Scottish women's football team as "two of the nicest blokes I've ever met."

If anyone confounds Cowan's sexist, stereotypical assumptions about women football players, then I would suggest it is Leanne Mabey. Hugely attractive with long, dark hair, the 26-year-old from north London could never be mistaken for a man – even by someone as ignorant as Cowan.

The heir to a dynasty of Tottenham Hotspur fans, Leanne inherited her father's love of football and, fuelled by her tomboy nature she began playing for Wembley Mill Hill/Barnet Ladies at the age of seven.

'I was always the one in the playground kicking about with the boys. I just loved playing it. Most of the boys were my friends - they used to fight over me being on their team.'

Embracing sport at an early age, Leanne loved cricket, basket ball and tennis and ran the 800 metres and cross country. She played with a mixed team until she was 12 years old, when gender seemingly kicks in, and she was scouted to play for Queen's Park Rangers under-15s where she became captain. Playing centre-midfield, continues to play for the FA Women's Premier League club today.

Mabey concedes she has always been very competitive, but as a child was nothing like the confident, self-assured woman she appears to be today.

'I wouldn't volunteer for anything, I was really shy and very quiet, but I was always quite loud on the football pitch! Playing football has definitely made me more confident.'

As a child Leanne says there were few role-models for a young woman player. Her first football hero was Italian player del Piero - although her first was the Brazilian

team because she loved the kit – but the profile of women's football was so low, that even for someone so involved in the game, she looked to players like Gennaro Gattuso, who plays the same position, for inspiration. Later she came to admire the universally acclaimed US footballer Mia Hamm.

But women players with Hamm's public profile are few and far between and investment, and media exposure, seem to conspire to deny women's football teams the financial and celebrity success of their male counterparts.

'The top players in women's football don't earn in a year as much as their male equivalents do in a week. The Women's Super League is now being broadcast over the summer on the BT Sports channel – partly to fill the gap until the new men's season, but clearly that doesn't have the same audience or prestige as Sky Sports.'



©KevinRichards

'Most of the boys were my friends - they used to fight over me being on their team.'

If there are psychological barriers for women engaging in sport, then economics must be a parallel reason. Mabey says they are lucky at QPR because the men's team is very supportive of the women's team. The players are provided with training, physiotherapy and playing kit, which is generous compared to smaller clubs where players must meet expenses themselves.

During the season, Mabey's weekly schedule includes three training sessions and a game alongside her full-time job as the Office Manager for a charity.

'It's difficult to balance both, but work pays the bills. Football isn't just a hobby to me, but I can't afford to give up work to make the transition to be able to play full time. At the moment though,

it feels like I get the best of both worlds.'

The players take their sport seriously and while the majority of the work takes place during the training sessions, the preparation and routine before a game are critical psychologically. In the two hours before kick-off the team will have a warm up, a pep talk from their manager, a briefing from their coach and a look at the pitch.

'Our kits are laid out for us and as soon as you go in the changing room, you remember why you're there. There's no chitchat and no mucking about. We have music blaring out and everyone gets in the zone, but we're just focused on the doing the job. I do get nervous, but I prepare myself. The last game [we played] we had to

win the game to win the league, so there was a lot of pressure, but I'm quite self-confident.'

I suspect some of that self-confidence comes from the team spirit which extends beyond the pitch and the friendships forged through the game.

'I've made some of my best mates through football and when you have these people telling you you've had a good game, it does wonders for your self-esteem. Lots of the male friends I used to kick about with come to watch [the games]; the men I know are generally supportive.'

For women's football to have the status, exposure and investment of the men's game, then the participation of male professionals



©ColinEvansatKapture-it.com

may be crucial. There are more male coaches working in women's football now and professional players go on to manage women's teams, for example, former West Ham player Julian Dicks now manages the club's professional women's team.

Physical differences between the sexes differentiate the nature of play. Male Premier League games having a quicker tempo than women's Super League games, but what women players may lack in pace, being smaller and slither can be an advantage in terms of being closer to the ball and more flexible, so women players are often more skillful.

Leanne says although the women's game is feminine 'in a certain way, essentially we don't

play any different - there's still a bit of argy bargy.'

Untrammelled by the multi-million pound payrolls of the male league, women's games are a lot cheaper at the turnstiles, often free to get in and consequently attract a lot of families in the crowd.

I ask Leanne what it's like to score a goal.

'You're full of adrenaline and it's over in a moment then all your team mates are all over you. When you hear everyone cheering it gives you that extra 20 per cent - you feel like you could run around forever.'

There is no doubting Leanne Mabey's love of her game, her

commitment and that her life revolves around football - at least during the season - so I wonder about her plans for the future.

'I don't want to stop and as long as I keep myself healthy there's no reason I should. I suppose for women it's having a family that means they stop playing, but then I can't think of anything better than taking my own child to training and encouraging them.'

For information and fixtures for the new season in August visit www.qpr.co.uk/team/women where you can also vote for Leanne as scoring the goal of the season.

Follow Leanne on twitter @LeanneMabey

Her Agenda

Spoke in the wheel

The Stiletto on Wheels Mountain Bike event take place in Stanmer Park in Brighton. Four hours solo, in pairs or Cinderella One Lap. Duration two and four hours.

Stiletto on Wheels
6 September
Visit <http://stilettonwheels.com>

Be a good sport

The Women's Sport Network is the UK's leading forum for people passionate about women's sport and people working in sport. The Network provides opportunities to meet, share experiences and discuss key issues affecting women in sport.

Visit <http://www.wsff.org.uk>

Having a ball

The Women's Rugby World Cup 2014 kicks off on 1 August in Marcoussis and Paris.

For venues and fixtures visit <http://www.rwcwomens.com>

Teed off

The Women's Open Amateur Stroke Play Championship is being held at Tandridge Gold Club in Surrey.

5 - 7 August
Visit <http://www.englandgolf.org>

If at first you don't succeed, tri tri and tri again

The Shock Absorber Women-only Triathlon is at Dorney Lake in Berkshire on 13 July.

Register by 7 July at <http://humanrace.co.uk/events/womenonly/womenonly-triathlon>

Charity run

Run for your favourite charity at the world's biggest half marathon in the world. The Bupa Great North Run takes place in Newcastle on 7 September.

To register visit <http://www.greatrun.org>

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